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Graphological Foregrounding in Niyi Osundare's *Village Voices*: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Poetry

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Abstract: This study explicates on graphological foregrounding and multimodal discourse analysis in selected poems of Osundare's anthology of poems tagged *Village Voices*. This is because many a times, one's own style of writing can be of deviating from the norms to convey an important message. As such, foregrounding appeared to be unusual to many readers thereby making it somehow difficult to easily decode messages contained in varieties of texts. With the aid of the theories of foregrounding by Jan Mukarousky and that of multimodal discourse analysis by Kress & van Leeuwen, eight poems were selected based on their graphological and multimodal affordance and were textually analysed via the aforementioned approaches. The poems are; I wake up this morning, sleeping, at five and twenty and eating tomorrow's yam. Others include; Feigning Rebel, A Reunion, The Cocks' Comb of fire and unequal fingers. It was discovered that the graphological and multimodal discourse features found in the selected poems were aptly foregrounded and encoded as well as disseminate their artistic vision, message and meaning, which consequently, help readers and critics to comprehend and interpret the poet's emotional feelings and disposition on the selected poems to convey cultural and socio-political messages.

Keywords: Graphology, multimodality, multimodal discourse analysis, foregrounding, graphological foregrounding, poetry, Niyi Osundare.



Introduction

This research, sets out to examine a graphological foregrounding and multimodal discourse analysis on selected poems in Osundare's anthology of poems titled *Village Voices* with a view to finding out how graphology and multimodality work together, and how both can be used in graphological and multimodal discourse of literary texts in order to reveal how writers use some of these devices to encode and disseminate their artistic vision and message, which consequently, helps readers and critics, comprehend and interpret their (the poets) emotional feelings and disposition.

Village Voices is the second volume of Osundare's poetry, songs from the market place being the first. The poems were published first in 1984 and then in 2003 and 2004 respectively. The anthology consists of thirty-eight poems which are divided into three categories. The first category is titled voices of dialogue and banter, the second, voices of coming and going and the third voices of anger and indictment.

It is obvious that language is a means of human communication. Certainly, the skilful use of language in poetry is one of the genres of literature for possible interpretation or meaning discourse. Poetry is open to limitless interpretations. In fact, the meaning of a poem changes not only from reader to reader, but also from reading to reading, i.e. every time one reads the same poem, he or she perceives its message differently, therefore receives a new effect. Osundare (2008) considers work of art as communication. Therefore, language is regarded as an essential tool in the world of poetry. It is crucial to know that Osundare's poems are distinctive and exceptional among his contemporaries because of his style of involving some aspects of graphology and multimodal discourse features. As Osundare (2008) argues, writers do communicate using different styles or ways of communication. He further states that "writing by its nature, is knotted by so many factors which he refers to as 'temporo-spatial matrix, a definite and definable occasion", in which case the writer's 'now' become the reader's 'then' etc. which consequently, this notion calls for critical interpretations and meaning-making.

Leech (2013) emphasises that literary language is difficult to be conceived as a describable language in its own right. Therefore, this Research examines how Osundare creatively deploys multimodal and graphological features as devices of communication to express his cultural and socio-political messages to his readers via foregrounding.

Literary texts are subjects to various interpretations. Meaning making and texts interpretations depend



largely on the language used and the style employed by a writer. Many times, one's own way of writing a text can be deviated from the norms to convey an important message. As such, it becomes unusual to the readers thereby making it somewhat difficult to easily decode the message of literary discourses.

Studies have been carried out on Niyi Osundare's poems but none of them has paid attention to the multimodal discourses and graphological foregrounded features that can be found in the poems and how they help the writer convey meaning. None of them also points out how the poet uses foregrounding and multimodal elements as means meaning-making. For instance, Osundare (2008) himself discusses on style and literary communication in African prose fiction in English but focuses more on how the question of literary communication raises many issues about the status and function of literature in Africa. Alu (2008) writes on "style and the new poetic Revolution in Niyi Osundare's poetry. Osoba (2008) writes on Alliteration and Assonance in Niyi Osundare's Songs of the market place in which he makes a phonetic analysis. Felix and Ray (2010) have written an article on foregrounding but it is on syntagmatic foregrounding in Niyi Osundare's poetry. Their piece pays much attention to how the sound pattern relate to the sense of the texts. Others studies include; Ayokwu (2011) writes on Osundare's poetry and the Yoruba world view in which he analyses the use of indigenous Yoruba concept found in Osundare's texts. Olaleye (2015) writes on some selected poems in Osundare's Random Blues he undertakes a pragmatic analysis.

It is against this backdrop this study sets out uncover how the poet used foregrounding and multimodality to send across message to his readers. Thus, the main aim of this research is to reveal how, by deviating from the norm, writers, using their own peculiar way of writing (multimodal discourse and graphological features), to express their feelings and ideas to the extent that their attitude and disposition become very vivid to readers. In other words, how graphological deviation and multimodality aid writers and readers in conveying message and meaning construction of a given text.

The aim of this research is to present a graphological and multimodal discourse of selected poems in Osundare's *Village Voices*. Thus, the main objectives include:

1. To identify the multimodal and graphological features in the selected poems.
2. To examine how the identified multimodal and graphological features in the text can lead to an interpretation.
3. To explain how the poet uses foregrounding as a means, to achieve his aim of creating effects.



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As every research is expected to significantly play an important role in the academia, this research contributes to the growing literature on the interface between literature and language, precisely in multimodal discourse analysis and graphology as well as foregrounding. The research aims at sharpening our awareness of how elements (multimodality and graphology) work in literary texts regarding meaning-making. It also serves as a reference material for students and researchers who are interested in conducting further research on foregrounding, multimodal discourse analysis and graphological studies in poetry.

The research design is qualitative in method. Shank (2002) defines qualitative research as “a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning. Lincoln (2000) claims that qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach. The research therefore, will use descriptive approach which entails identifying, explaining and analysing each of the identified graphological and multimodal devices and other aspects of language discovered during the course of the study. In *Village Voices*, there are thirty poems out of which eight poems will be selected and used as a sample for analysis. The selection will be made across the three categories in which case the poems are to be studied at the graphological and multimodal discourse analysis. Thus, the research will find out the features in each of the selected poem and make a descriptive analysis on them and explicate how they communicate message or meaning to readers and analysts.

The study will be guided by the theories of foregrounding by Jan Mukarousky (1970) and multimodal discourse analysis by Kress, G. R., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). The concept of foregrounding was first postulated by Jan Mukarousky in his article "Standard Language and Poetic Language" in 1970 where he described foregrounding as the opposite of automatisisation. Hence, when linguistic devices are commonly used in such a way that they do not attract particular attention by the language user, it is referred to as automatisisation. On the other hand, foregrounding according to Mukarousky violates the scheme which automatisisation schematises and therefore, deautomatises. Nevertheless, according to Mukarousky, rhyme, repetition, archaic and foreign words deautomatises the standard language and mark the language as literary. He further claimed that foregrounding is a basic principle of aesthetic communication. It is defined as a conscious or deliberate deviation from the rules of language code or from the accepted conventions of its use which stands out against a background of a normal usage.

In relation to poetry, foregrounding theory categorically assumes that poetic language deviates from norms characterising the ordinary use of language and that the deviation interferes with cognitive principles and



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processes that make communication possible. Peer and Hakemulder, (2006) argue that literary work should be distinguished from other works through the use of strange words, metaphors and unfamiliar terms. Thus, foregrounding started basically as a theory of literature in the Greek philosophy. Later on, Russian Formalists and Czech Structuralists emphasized the importance of foregrounding in literature.

On the other, the theory of multimodality or multimodal discourse analysis explicates on meaning-making beyond only verbal and written language to include others aspects of language such as, signs, gesture, graphic, sound, colour, maps, charts etc. in others words, it involves the use of different modes to express oneself in writing, such as colours, images, graphics, sounds etc.). Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) cited in Olateju (2015) explains that, in western cultures, the preference for oil paintings has reduced and some old art works are now confined to museums and galleries for record purposes and posterity. In Nigeria for example, in religious circles, classical music and hymns (which were purely mono modal) are gradually giving way to choruses, choreography, artistic dances which are multimodal in the sense that they are accompanied with all kinds of colors, styles of costumes, lyrics, movements, artistic displays etc. Going through some media resources such as magazines, newspapers, photographs, committee rooms of corporations, institutions, display of menu lists at eateries, directions at bus stops etc. reveals that these resources have taken a new multimodal outlook and some of the compositions cannot be glossed over because of their attractive and appealing nature.

In support of the above claim by Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), Olateju and Oyebode (2014:14) note that: Discourse analysis has gone beyond ordinary analysis of any written or spoken text. It has extended its tentacles to all other modes of communication which of course now gives readers or researchers a wider scope to operate in the enterprise of interpreting and analyzing any form of text in arriving at a robust meaning or the intended message.

Meaning is therefore made in any form of communication in different ways. It could be through the linguistic elements or the visuals. It could also be through different modes or media in an ensemble. The study of meaning in communication has grown beyond the traditional idea that meaning resides only in written language or that written language is the central thing in meaning. There are other extra- linguistic and paralinguistic resources in any form of communication. All these other modes have always been there but have not really been spoken about until scholars such as Gunther Kress, van Leeuwen, Jay Lemke, David



Machin and some others started writing about them (Olateju, 2015).

The Concept of Foregrounding

Foregrounding as a linguistic strategy is closely related with a specific kind of aesthetic exploitation of language that takes the form of surprising a reader into a fresh awareness the linguistic medium. Foregrounding can be seen as an outcome of deviation from linguistic (and non-linguistic) norms of various kinds (Leech and Short 1981). Literature must de-automatise or foreground language use (Leech and Short 1981). The notion of foregrounding is helpfully described by M.A.K Halliday (1971) as “prominence that motivated” is not only produced by “departure from a norm” but also by attainment of a norm. Raymond Mackey (1994) maintains that in the stylistic analysis of literary texts, the concept of foregrounding is frequently cited. The concept holds that literary artistry is to be measured by the extent and complexity of the language patterning perceived in the literary work in question. This implies that, foregrounded language is language that the literary artist has made prominent so that it stands out from the rest of the text, which consequently make it to become significant. This also is being supported by Felix N. Ogoanah and Ray N. Chikogu (2010) argue that foregrounding is a literary device by which linguistic features are intentionally brought into prominence. Foreground can occur on all levels of language such as phonology, graphology, morphology, lexis, syntax, discourse analysis, stylistics and pragmatics (Simpson 2004). It is generally used to highlight important parts of a text, to aid memorability and to invite interpretation.

Graphological foregrounding

The word “graphology” is a combination of the Greek word grapheirt, which means “to write,” and the suffix “ology,” a branch of scientific study. It is believed that M. C Itosh (1961) was the first scholar who used the term graphology in relation to linguistics. Graphology, then, is the study of writing based on a growing body of knowledge which is constantly being tested in practical use. It has been observed that every written sample exhibits the same wonderful variety as the faces, fingerprints, voices and bodies of mankind. People recognise their friends’ voices on the phone and by the tone alone know their state of happiness or sadness, anger or warmth. Handwriting is a reflection of mood changes, characterising the writer’s state of mind at that moment. Leech (2014) posits that “graphology goes beyond orthography”. It refers to the whole system of writing: Punctuation, spacing as well as paragraphing. For Alibi (2007) among all other features, graphology also entails the foregrounding of quotation marks, full stop, colon, semi colon, comma, hyphens,



ellipses, capitalization, spacing, question marks etc.

Initially, graphology is used to study people's handwriting in order to discover what sort of personality they may have. Wales (2001) has made clarifications as to what graphology seems to include. According to him, graphology should go beyond letters of the alphabet. It should include punctuation marks and spacing. This shows the subsequent perception of graphology from other points of view by many researchers. While some researchers have directly ignored its linguistic meaning and just concentrated on its psychological aspects, others have reflected on its linguistic nature. Oxford English Dictionary (2013) has defined graphology in relation to linguistic as "the study of written and printed symbols and of writing system. Encyclopaedia Britannica (2011) has tried to associate graphology with what is called "the inference of character from a person's handwriting". Wales (2011) suggests that graphology is the study of graphemes and other features associated with the written medium, such as punctuation, paragraphing or spacing. It can also be considered as "the writing system of a language, manifested in handwriting and typography.

However, any research focuses on graphological features to study poetry would have guide in Leech (2004) who states that graphology is the characteristic line-by-line arrangement of poetry on the printed page. Hence it is a graphic representation of language on paper. In this research therefore, insights, concepts and discoveries from graphology and lexis are drawn to analyse some selected poems mentioned earlier.

Multimodal Discourse Analysis

Multimodal discourse analysis (MDA) is 'an emerging paradigm in discourse studies which extends the study of language to the study of language in combination with other resources, such as images, colours, scientific symbolism, gestures, actions, music and sound' (O'Halloran KL, et al. 201: 68 -77). Researchers in this area seek to 'identify the influence of mode on meaning within a given context, focusing on co-occurrence interaction between multiple semiotic system' (Baldry A.P., and Thibault P.J, 2006). Multimodal discourse analysis is essentially concerned with the theory and analysis of semiotic resources and the semantic expansions which occur as semiotic choices combined in multicultural phenomena.

The "inter-semiotic" relation arising from the interaction of semiotic choices, known as inter-semiosis, is a central area of multimodal research (Jewitt C., and Oyama R, 2009). The theory is also concerned with the concept of 'visual modality'. In Bell's second variable based on the work of Kress G, and Van Leeuwen T, (2006) it is defined as "the represented realism of an image" (Bell, P., 2001;10-34). It also dwells on whether



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an image is portrayed as realistic and lifelike, or as something that can be classified as either a fantasy or caricature.

The term 'modality' is a linguistic one and refers to the value or credibility of statements about the world. Modality is interpersonal rather than ideational, because it does not express absolute truth or falsehood. It produces shared truths aligning readers and viewers with what they hold to be true for themselves, while distancing from others whose values they do not (Kress G, and Van Leeuwen T, 2006). In terms of visual modality, visuals can represent people, places, concepts, cultures, ideologies and things as though they are real. In this sense, modality judgments are social and dependent upon what is considered as real in the social group for which the representation is primarily intended. According to Kress G, and Van Leeuwen T, (2006), modality results from: ...the degree to which certain means of pictorial expressions (colour, representational detail, and depth, tonal shades... to explicate meaning.

Niyi Osundare was born in 1947 in Ikere, Ekiti state, Nigeria. He is a prolific poet, dramatist and literary critic. He obtained degrees at the University of Ibadan, the University of Leeds and York University, England. He has been identified as a champion of the right to free and is a strong believer in the power of words, saying "to utter is to alter". Osundare believes that there is no choice for the African poet but to be political.

'You cannot help quiet about the situation in the kind of countries we find ourselves, in Africa. When you wake up and there is no running water, when you have a massive power outage for days and nights, no food on the table, no hospital for the sick, no peace of mind...'(Osundare, 2014).

Osundare's works include: songs from the Market Place, The Eye of the Earth, Moon songs, Songs of the Season, Waiting Laughters, Mild life, Random Blues, The World is an Egg and Village Voices (which has been divided into three categories). His works vividly convey his concept on the relationship between the oppressed Nigerian/African and the crop of leaders there. Most of the themes of his writing include corruption, poverty, administrative mismanagement etc. (Alu2008). According to Saleh Abdu (2003), going by the titles of the three categories of poems in Village Voices, "the poems are grouped along thematic and, to some extent, stylistic lines". For example, readers could understand, as Saleh (2003) argues all the poems in Village Voices "assume the voice and world-view of the villager" and make the judgment that, Osundare's inspiration was drawn from his experience of many years of exploitation and neglect from the powers that



govern him with the help of the style the writer employed.

Osundare's style appears to be influential by usually making his poetry richly coloured by common expressions of traditional life (like proverb and songs) which reflects the worldview of his people. His poetry is found to be accessible because in it he assumes the voice of the unlettered peasants and villagers.

Analysis Of Graphological Foregrounding And Multimodal Discourse Features

This section presents the data on graphological and multimodal discourses in the selected poems and make analysis and discussions on them with the intention to explicate how meaning is being communicated to readers and analysts. It is therefore essential to understand that Village Voices centred on the lamenting about social and economic discrimination in Nigeria; especially after the oil industry brought marvellous wealth to the upper class along with exceptional governmental corruption and greed through the 1970s and 1980s.

In the village voices, it is evident that some graphological rules are broken intentionally by the poet in his effort to use foregrounding to convey meaning. More specifically, this research pays attention to the typical uses of capital letters, words in italics (italicization), punctuation marks, line spacing, random ordering of lines, graphic onomatopoeia and use images.

The Use of Capital Letters

To start with, one of the graphological devices the poet uses to diverge from the convention is capital letters. The general practice is to begin each line of a poem with a capital letter, irrespective of whether a line starts with a new sentence, proper noun or not. There are some instances where the poet uses capital on occasional basis, not like the norm demands.

I wake up this morning
with a song in My thought
A youthful breeze harps the leaves
rising feet drum the road
to meet upland sun
my sole trends the dew rousing my body
to the virgin cool of the earth.

(I wake up this morning)



The stanzas continue, with the poet capitalizing the pronouns I, he and my which open the first lines of each stanza. This is a style used by the poet to portray negatively what people in authority do badly and make all efforts to cover their shameful deeds. He uses capital I to win the minds of his readers to reason with his opinion of going against the negative issues such as social and political corruption, oppression suffered by the masses etc.

This way of foregrounding use of capital letters becomes quite clear in his poem “unequal fingers” where just like EE Cumming, he uses small letters almost throughout the poem except in some few places, like in the first line of the fourth stanza. This is a distinctive deviation that one can find in poetry.

When the time is ripe
the sick will tell all ears
the silent secret of the drum
 ...we are not bats

Blind to the glaring happenings
of a tricky day...
(Unequal fingers)

Evidences have shown however that, Osundare uses capitalization in some cases to make emphasis on the message he conveys so that he becomes very clear. In the poem “A Reunion”, the poet says:

We started school the same day
and together bore the flying fury
of the teacher’s ceaseless cane
together we parroted the ABC
till we scribbled our first broken letters
in the white man’s tongue.

The ABC in line 4 of the first stanza is used not for the sake of abbreviation as the case may be, but for the poet to emphasize on how the western education acquired by some elites make them move on a parallel line which creates a border between the educated elites who are obviously in a ruling class and the semi villagers literates who are the villagers being addressed to by the poet and who must have not attended



university where like Osundare said, there are strange factories manufactured rulers of tomorrow.

There is however, a similar example in the poem “the stars did it” where the poet says:

In GRA, children quarrel

Over the choices of cars

Strutting out in the costliest velvet...

Another example is in the poem “not in my season of songs:

... Your father, the D.O.s shit carrier,
who hounded kinsmen as tax debtors
and drafted people in to forced labour.

It has been observed that, in poetry, letters become capitalized if they are important, shouted or need to pop out, just like Osundare does in his poems. This means, a poet can manipulate the style of capitalization to fit the situation.

The lack of capitalization in poems like “unequal finger” is an indicative of abstract expression of the lack of modesty or ordinariness.

In another dimension, among the words Osundare capitalizes in his poems is the personal pronoun I as can be seen in the poem “A Dialogue of the Drums. The “I” capitalized by the poet is not the usual “I” that everybody is familiar with. The pronoun is written vertically which as graphologists believed, signifies independence value. It also shows how the writer wishes to find his own way of life, respond to life and protect his innermost feeling. This has been observed in the following stanza:

I will not only give legs to my coiling words

I will also give them the fang of facts

It is argued by Karen Amend and Mary S. Luiz (1980) that pronoun I printed in cursive writing shows clear constructive thinking and **independence**.

Italicization

Italic is a style of typeface in which letters slant to the right are used customarily to give emphasis to the key words and phrases in a sentence.

On the contrary, in poetry, readers generally read italics as a whisper or very breathy voice and bold as a shout or clear ringing voice.



Niyi Osundare italicizes some specific words in his poems for two or more reasons. In the first place, the fact that most of the words he puts in italics are of Yoruba, reveals his central experience and his closeness to African linguistic and central roots. It also indicates the category of people whom he addresses to (the villagers). The examples of italicization appear in the following poem.

In “A Dialogue of the Drums” in which the poet says: in stanza three lines 12, 13 and 15

... I have thrilled royal steps
With *gbedu*'s majestic accent
And learnt why *egiri* turns thick ears
To the hunters feeble arrows
I have part a still to *ibembe*...

The italicized words are the types of drums used by Yoruba people and the names of dances associated with them.

In “Killing Without a Swords,” the poet writes in the first and second stanzas:

... with *egusi* soup whose taste
stank the tongue to the palate
... he spreads out in *sanyan*
alabanada adorns in head

In the poet's effort to describe the greedy self-serving politicians, he writes by italicizing the name of a warrior whose Sword has two edges and which kills both ways. In “the politician's Two Mouths”, the poet says:

The politician's mouth has two edges
like *Esimuda*'s sword
it is murder both ways.

Moreover, in the second instances, Osundare italicizes some words in some poems for emphasis and allow reasoning with him in his attempt to depict how the common man is abused, robbed, oppressed and dispossessed.

This has been observed in the poem: “A Reunion” where the poet writes:

...I visited your house



and saw your little brother
fashioning kites with
your Pictorial English Grammar
and I knew how far, how very far you had gone.

In the poem, “The Cock’s Comb of Fire”, the poet italicizes the last line of every stanza except the first and the last stanzas.

Use of Punctuation Marks

Punctuation marks are symbols that are used to organize and clarify the meaning of writing, e.g. a comma, period or question mark. Punctuation in poetry is similar to punctuation in prose and serves almost the same purpose as bar lines in the music without which words and notes will not flow all together.

However, the deviated use of punctuation marks helps poets to add special flavour to their poems and to achieve specific poetic purposes. Punctuation marks exhibit emotions of the poet.

In village voices, it has been observed that Niyi Osundare minimizes use of punctuation marks to the extent that in some poems, only few or none of the punctuation marks is used. In the poem “Sleeping at Five and Twenty”, which has seven stanzas with thirty-seven lines, the poet uses only two apostrophe, one quotation mark and one question mark. In “Feigning Revel” he uses no any punctuation mark other than question mark and parenthesis. The first and the last stanzas ended with a question mark which indicates a state of confusion about how things were going as can be seen below:

Tell us
are you real revolutionaries
or feigning kings
waiting for a crowns?
...hence we ask
are you real revolutionaries
or feigning kings
waiting for a crowns?

Sometimes, Osundare uses question marks to ask important questions, the answers of which he does not know. The poet says in “Eating with all the fingers”



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You jery up sleep and find us eating
you immediately want a scoop, just wait if we
started this way.
Would you wake up?
To a single morsel?

Here, style is used by the poet to question the person in which case former question stresses the later. The absence of punctuation marks in some poems signals the chaotic nature of the society, absence of stability and the competitive nature of life. The reader is made to feel the situation by reading through lines without a pause. This is an internal deviation one can find in poetry. An instance about that is in the poem “The Land of Unease” where the poet says:

land never knows peace
where a few have too much
and many none at all
The yam of this world
Is enough for all mouths
which pay daily homage
to the god og the throat
enough for the aged
awaiting days dusk
and the young peeping
at tomorrow
from mothers back...

Paragraphing (indentation)

What appears to be most strange is the use of indentation in poetry. This is because, in the written form of many languages, an indentation is an empty space at the new paragraph. Meanwhile, paragraphs are used to organize longer prose.



At his own style, Niyi Osundare deviates from the normal ways of indenting lines to achieve his effects. In the poem “Dying Another’s Death”, he indents some lines within a stanza to show the unfairly created borders between the ruling class and the masses and how former uses the later for attaining political position. Osundare says:

Call back those in Eton and Oxford
extract them from the labyrinths of Havard
and let them serve now
the state they have always served
Let this war be fought by

President’s children
Governor’s children
Senator’s children
Banker’s children
Bishop’s children

and others who cut up the country
like an unending cake.

In the above extract, readers are taken to the right edge of the stanza to observe how the ruling class who always are in a different position from the common people gang themselves to benefit from the divide and rule policy which gives them the chance of enjoying the state’s resources.

A similar instance occurs in another poem titled “we have waited so long”. In this poem, unlike in the former, the ruling class have been personified with “the moon” whose smile is waited to be seen, “a youth sun” who unrolls the mat of a spreading day, by the so long waiters who happen to be villagers, now protesting against waiting and still would eat their food raw. The poet says:

We have waited this long
to see the moon put a smile
on the crescent lip of the sky...



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we have watched a youth sun
unroll the mat of a spreading day
our morning is born
on the bed of a breezy dawn
we have waited so long
around the hearth
we cannot eat our food raw.

This style of indentation has been used as opener by Osundare in one of the poem which stand as a dedication to his father in one of the preliminary pages. The poet states:

to

My father

Oguntasolo Ariyoosu Osundare

a farmer

who knows the rhythm of the seasons

a conventionalist

who savors the flavor of words

a singer

whose throat is honey to the ear

a drummer

whose hands disseminate delight from the talkative face of the drum?

and

other African peasants

for long victims of exploitative neglect rising struggling

to live

rather than

merely subsist.

From the onset, this non-titled poem displays the mind map of the poet and his will of being considerate with the rural agrarian tradition which also suggests the title of his collection village violets. The poem,



however, serves as dedication and can be reconstructed as follows:

Dedication:

“to my father; a farmer, a conversationalist, a singer, a drummer and to other African peasants who are being exploited but still struggling to remain alive.”

Random Ordering of Lines

One thing very unique is the inconsistent ordering of lines in many poems. Osundare has taken it as a style not to bother about the number of lines each stanza, in each poem would take. The attitude of becoming too much insensitive in the order and arrangement of lines depicts the poet’s familiarity and affinity with the nature of African literature. It also reveals how ambitious the poet is, to push up the promotion of literature in the African indigenous languages. This view has been supported by Osundare himself when he writes.

“...the way out of these problems lies in the development,
Cultivation and promotion of literature in the indigenous
Languages, a desirable objective that can only materialize
When the present philistinistic socio-political system in Africa
Has been changed (Osundare 2008).

There is also portrayal of the oratory capacity of the (typical African) poet in disseminating ideas. In the second stanza of the poem “A reunion; the poet composes 23 lines in which no rhyming pattern has been observed. The poet says:

We shared the same meatless meals
and took turns in your first khaki trousers
we took the same entrance examinations
to institutions of higher learning...

In the same poem, however, the poet often uses one word to stand independently as a line forming a stanza. He for instance, uses adverbial words ‘later’ to form the third stanza, ‘then’ to mean fifth stanza. These two stanzas in the poem are at least out of the eleven stanzas in the poem, the second stanza being the highest.

Deviant placement of letters, words and lines on a page is indicating unconscious over control on the part



of a writer who is afraid of losing control of him or of his surroundings. Osundare become bold in using unarranged lines and spaces.

Illustrative Onomatopoeia

This refers a kind of symbolism evident in poems as deviation. It demonstrates unrestricted creativity in poetry. In words, it however refers to the organization of utterances to form symbolic visual shapes. Osundare has employed this technique aesthetically in his poems to create a visual relationship by using written symbols. The poet writes in “Dying Another’s Death”:

Let this war be fought by
Presidents’ children
Governors’ children
Senators’ children
Bishops’ children

Others who cut the country like an unending cake.

The above lines reveal Osundare as a poetic architect who skillfully enough, tries to match his moods by using deviational techniques in order to voice out such moods. The lines describe the poet’s anger and frustration to those who cut and share the resources of the country “like an unending cake” insisting that instead of them to use youths as their political weapons, they should rather, use their children to fight for them. This creates a visual awareness in the readers’ minds.

Use of Images – Multimodal Discourse

Poets use imagery to draw readers in to a sensory experience. Using images often provides us with mental pictures that appeal to our senses of sight, sound, taste, touch and smell. In essence, images convey meaning. Therefore, the purpose of imagery in poetry is to help get the poet’s message across in language that is clear and very usual. Poets use words to create images in the readers’ mind thereby interpreting the poem in the way they see it.

What appears to be strange is the use of pictures in Osundare’s poem. A part from using words to create images, Osundare tries to use real pictures to convey his message as in the following



Fig 1 (A Dialogue of the Drum)



Fig2 (A Villager's Protest)



Fig3 (Chicken Story)



Fig4 (Cradling Hands)



Fig 4 (An In-laws Message)



Fig 5 (The Land of Unease)



Fig.6 (Eating with All Fingers)



Fig. 7 (The Bride's Song)

Village life becomes easier and understandable with so many descriptions. The fact that Osundare addresses village dwellers makes him use pictures extraordinarily in his poems, to illustrate the ideas he wants to convey. The above pictures are used by the poet in different poems, with each, either explicating on an idea or complementing it.

In figure one (1) a picture of drum is used ordinarily to symbolize the title of the poem (A Dialogue of The Drum). In the poem, various types of drums are mentioned which serve different purposes. This also discloses the importance of Drum in Yoruba culture where it is used for dissemination of information and for conveying different messages. To Osundare, drum speaks and has relevance in many places. It speaks in the palace and marketplace as well. In this regard, the poet says:

I, owner of the throat for pleasing songs,
And hands sculptured
For the talkative face of the drum...
(A Dialogue of the Drum)

In stanza 4 the poet also stresses:

You singer of the royal songs
your drum, dumb in the market place.

only talks in the palace of gold...



The picture in figure two (2) is mocking politicians who make all promises of turning villagers' life to the best by building schools, hospitals, bringing water giving farmers the best of their sweat and make poverty a thing of history. The politicians, like the picture suggests, change after ward and forget the promises. The poet goes further to describe the politicians by comparing them with Esuru (a kind of yam, soft, loose, tasty but impossible to pound) in that, they use a soft tongue, interact with them to win their votes after which, they become complicated. The poet writes:

Esuru grows swollen-headed

and outgrows the prestigious belly...

Osundare moves further to describe them as:

Men of deep unwisdom

knowing not that

Power is the bird of the forest
which nests on one tree today
and tomorrow pitches its tent
on another.

(A Villager's Protest)

One could also learn from figure three (3) and seven (7) that the content of the poems reflected in the picture which may of course, share different but somewhat reflected message. In figure six (6) for example, there is a portrayal of greediness which is discussed through the lines of the poem "Eating with all the Fingers".

The affairs of this life
are like peoples eating
Some dip ten fingers
and clogs their throats
Their greed chokes the land
with sprawling dirt.

(Eating with all Fingers)



Osundare, however, uses picture of five fingers as can be seen in picture five (5) in the poem “The Land of Unease”. The messages conveyed there, correlates with the one in “Eating with all fingers”. The poet tries to criticize the attitude of being greedy, selfish and unjust. Few are taking advantage by dominating many, accumulating wealth illegally and excessively, and pushing many others to hungry and death. Osundare displays the pictures of palm which by its nature, carries five unequal fingers, with the thumb isolating from the other four.

Meanwhile, by its nature, thumb, has always been thicker than the other fingers. It has also been in isolation. The wise saying that fingers are not equal is often used by the few narrow-minded people who would want to always over-take many others and make life most joyful to themselves. In the first stanza of the poem, the poet says:

That land knows peace
where few have too much
and many have none at all

This is illustrated in the “Palm Picture” in which each of the four fingers is not as thick as the thumb. The poet goes further:

The yam of this world
is enough for all mouths.

The message becomes much clear in the last three stanzas where the poet writes:

The big knives
pushes bellies bloated by excess
the small die hungry deaths
in the village streets
and when we ask why
they say fingers are not equal
we ask again
why have a few chosen to be thumbs
and the many others an amadindinrin
clinging precariously



to the periphery of the palm?

The above lines have described the attitude of showing social inequality and exclusion. These graphological foregrounded items help the reader not to only have full comprehension of the message, but also be able to make as many interpretations as possible in order to access meaning.

The graphological and multimodal discourse analysis reveal that the poets employ a number of techniques to bring about linguistic deviation, thereby resulting to foregrounding of the key elements. Analysis of the data obtained has shown that Niyi Osundare has a special ability in employing a lot of linguistic devices to foreground his poems so that the language used will suit his purpose of meaning-making, to convey his message and achieve aesthetic effect, which by implication assists the readers make several interpretations of the poem and have access to their meaning.

Graphological deviation (foregrounding) represents the violations of regular lineation. Typographical lines and stanza in poetry are independent of standard units of punctuation. This arrangement has a special communicative force. Poets like Niyi Osundare, fully exploits orthographic deviations like discarding of capital letters, punctuation, and unusual use of images etc. This skillful use of linguistic devices in the poems renders the visual identification of the theme. For example, it is conventionally accepted that each line in a poem will have the initials of the first words written in a capital letters. Contrary to the convention, Osundare, as has been observed, uses small letters in some poems to begin each line. The poet does so to ensure that his emotion has been reflected in the poem so that readers will reason will him and comprehend the message. This tells us that language can be used in an unusual way and contribute to the making of the intended meaning. Absence of capital letters or unusual use of them is a geographical foregrounding that this study is as able to find out in village voices. Another geographical item found by this research foregrounded in the poems are punctuation marks. These linguistic items contribute to the effectiveness of communication. For example they indicate to the reader, whether a sentence has ended or not, is asking questions or just is a short pause by the speaker. In poetry, punctuation marks function in the same way they do in prose. But Osundare resolves not use some oral in some poems. In other words, in village voices there is occasional use of punctuation marks and in such instances, readers are left to continue reading between the lines without knowing when and where to stop or where to make a short pause and where sentences meet and where they are apart.



Italicization has also been used in the poems in such a way that readers could understand that either the poet uses the style to symphasize or to emphasize. Instances have shown from the analysis where Osundare has drawn the readers' attention to some key important messages.

Research has discovered the foregrounded use of indentation and illustrative onomatopoeia as a ladder for extending message. The psychological dissatisfaction of the political system and the poor leadership of the society have been depicted by the poet using these graphological devices.

In the multimodal discourse analysis pictures or images on their own right, are subjects to interpretations and meaning-making. On the contrary, words are used architecturally in literary texts, especially poems to create mental images in the readers mind. But yet the poet decides to accompany his poems with vivid pictures for more meaning creation. This gives the readers more chances of comparing the pictures with what happens in reality and consequently become much clearer about the messages contained in the poem.

Conclusion

This study has discussed on the foregrounded graphological devices and multimodal discourse elements used by Niyi Osundare in his poems to make meaning and achieve aesthetic ends, using the theories of foregrounding by Mukarousky's and multimodal discourse by Kress & van Leeuwen as its models for analysis. It is therefore vivid from the discussions and analysis that the graphological devices and the multimodal discourse elements analysed play a vital role in conveying the message of a literary text particularly poetry. This helps writers in a strategic way emphasise on some important areas for the readers to fully access the cumulative meaning of their texts. It has therefore been uncovered through this study that foregrounding can be used as a technique through which some key linguistic devices are made to look as more important than the others. Such devices become important because they are graphologically deviants which are used to enhance aesthetic sense and express certain emotions.

This study has been conducted through poetic analysis in a qualitative mode of inquiry. The study ends up by ascertaining the types of linguistic devices foregrounded and the reasons for their use in Niyi Osundare's collection of poems Village Voices.

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